



# NEWS RELEASE

**STATE BOARD  
OF EQUALIZATION**

450 N Street  
Sacramento  
California 95814

**BILL LEONARD**  
Member, BOE  
Second District

**RAMON J. HIRSIG**  
Executive Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NR# 18-L  
Date: March 29, 2006  
Contact: Anita Gore  
Communications Office  
(916) 327-8988  
Website: <http://www.boe.ca.gov>

**LEONARD ANNOUNCES IMPROVED PUBLIC RECORDS ACCESS**

Board of Equalization (BOE) Member Bill Leonard today announced improvements in the BOE's information disclosure practices and its compliance with the Public Records and Political Reform Acts.

A recent report, issued by open-government advocacy group CalAware, detailed visits to 31 different departments requesting litigation documents and the Statement of Economic Interests (also known as a Form 700s in California) for the top-ranking employee. The BOE scored 50 out of 100 points possible, with an average score of 37.

BOE Executive Director Ramon Hirsig reported to the five sitting BOE members on staff's progress since the audit's release. The BOE plans to use its website ([www.boe.ca.gov](http://www.boe.ca.gov)) to help guide taxpayers in their inquiries, and offer new training for BOE staff on disclosure law and public records access.

"We welcome this review and are committed to addressing any deficiencies brought to our attention," said Hirsig. "We're going to take every step possible to improve access to public records because transparency and public access to information are critical elements of responsible government. We are committed to offering the highest quality of service in those areas."

Larger agencies like the BOE face the challenge of archiving thousands of public records, while at the same time, making those records readily available to information requests. For example, BOE employees in offices across the state file over 1,700 Statements of Economic Interests each year. Statements of Economic Interests detail reportable financial interests of public employees, in accordance with the Political Reform Act.

The BOE has taken steps recently to make other public documents more accessible. The BOE has redesigned its website to allow easier site navigation and quicker access to important reports on memorandum opinions, regulations developments, and other rule making documentation.

Also, in September of 2005, the BOE launched an ambitious review of its administrative and appellate rules to streamline procedures, guarantee due process, and improve the level of information available to California taxpayers. The review is currently being developed through a public process of meetings between staff, taxpayers, and other interested parties. For more about this review, go to <http://www.boe.ca.gov/regs/timelineCAtax.htm>

Bill Leonard, of Sacramento/Ontario, was elected to his first term as Second District Member of the State Board of Equalization in 2002. Prior to his election, he served in the State

Assembly (1978-1988, 1996-2002) and in the State Senate (1988-1996).

The five-member Board of Equalization is a publicly elected tax board. The Board collects almost \$50 billion annually in taxes and fees supporting state and local government services. It hears business tax appeals, acts as the appellate body for franchise and personal income tax appeals, and plays a significant role in the assessment and administration of property taxes.

Other Board Members include Betty T. Yee of San Francisco, Acting Member, First District; Claude Parrish of Long Beach, Third District; Chairman John Chiang of Los Angeles, Fourth District and State Controller Steve Westly.

###